

Archbishop of Krakow and continues to do so as the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

He is said to be the most recognized man in the world. In fact he was named "Man of the Year" in Time magazine in 1994. But, that is not why I stand before you. I stand before you because this man has dedicated his life to the salvation of others.

I still remember when he was chosen by the College of Cardinals. There was a great deal of discussion about him, not because he was selected to become the Pope, but rather because he was the first non Italian Pope since 1522 and because he was only 58 years old. Now, twenty-two years later, neither his birth place nor his age are part of the discussion. I think that there is a lesson for all of us in that fact.

I support this award because Pope John Paul II has reached out to the people of this planet. He encourages fraternity and encourages people to live the gospel. And, in the final analysis, he has made the world a better place for us to live. I cannot think of a better reason for this body to give this or any award.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great man, Karol Jozef Wojtyla. Now known to the world as Pope John Paul II, this leader of the Catholic Church has championed the cause of promoting human rights and eliminating poverty and hunger around the world. Called by some the man of the century, John Paul II has been unafraid to articulate his vision of a better world and has the passion and integrity to work toward that goal. The bottom line in the debate over the nature of truth and freedom, he argues, is the sanctity of all humans who are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life and liberty—as written in our very own Declaration of Independence.

He was also a key figure at a pivotal juncture in world history. As a Cardinal in Poland, he was a shrewd and unflinching opponent of communism, advancing the church's agenda without allowing outright hostility and repression to develop.

As Pope, his support of the Solidarity movement was instrumental in the downfall of the government.

Today, just over nineteen years after a would-be assassin shot him on May 13, 1981, we vote to award Pope John Paul II with the Congressional Gold Medal. I ask all Members and the world to acknowledge his faith, his intellect and his wonderful contributions.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3544, the Pope John Paul II Congressional Gold Medal Act. As you know this bill would authorize a gold medal to be awarded on behalf of the Congress to Pope John Paul II in recognition of his many and enduring contributions to peace and religious understanding.

Born Karol Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland in 1920, Pope John Paul II has remained a leading champion of human rights around the world, and a strong moral leader for us all. Ordained in 1946, Pope John Paul II spent eight years as a professor of social ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. In 1964, he was named the archbishop of Krakow and only three years later he was appointed cardinal by Pope Paul VI. As the Archbishop of Krakow, he would prove himself to be a noble and trustworthy pastor in the face of Communist persecution.

On October 16, 1978, Cardinal Wojtyla was elected Pope. He took the name of his predecessors, and became the first Polish leader of the Roman Catholic Church and the youngest Pope in this century. In this capacity—as our society has grappled with serious social questions, Pope John Paul II has dealt with them in such a way as to maintain a peaceful and fair world order. In fact, over the last 50 years, he has remained a dedicated servant to the world. Throughout his many travels, he has promoted peace, nuclear disarmament, and the conquering of world hunger among other things. In addition, he has remained a beacon of strength and hope for every world citizen he comes into contact with.

As a result, I fully support this act and urge my colleagues to authorize the Congressional Gold Medal in honor of Pope John Paul II. God bless you and God Bless America.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor and strong supporter of H.R. 3544, to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Pope John Paul II for his outstanding leadership in promoting peace and understanding across the globe. Pope John Paul II is one of the greatest humanitarians of all time and this special award is a testament to his successful life's work in making the world a better and safer place.

Pope John Paul II has been a revolutionary in the world of religion. He has been a spiritual leader to over one billion Catholic Christians around the globe. He has served as an inspiration to millions of American Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Pope John Paul II has led the charge to unify not only diverse sects of Christianity, but also to bridge the gaps between all respected religious peoples throughout the world.

Over the years, Pope John Paul II has traveled the world as a "warrior of peace." His tireless effort to bring people together of different faiths has demonstrated to the rest of the world the wonderful possibilities of the good that can and will prevail when people of diverse, sometimes seemingly bipolar backgrounds begin to listen to one another too long.

From the United States to developing nations, Pope John Paul II has traversed the globe with a message of hope and freedom as our New Economy's prosperity continues to beat down the plight of poverty.

Pope John Paul II should be commended for his work in promoting democracy and for the demise of communism throughout Europe. Being such an outspoken leader in the battle of good versus evil enabled Pope John Paul II to play a critical role in the debate which lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Time and time again, Pope John Paul II spoke up and defended liberty and justice wherever totalitarian regimes have arisen.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for bringing consideration of this legislation to the House Floor. Pope John Paul II is a deserving recipient of this special award, as he has been a leader in promoting peace and democracy throughout the world. With that said, I am privileged to join my colleagues in support of awarding Pope John Paul II the Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3544, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3544.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS' MILLENNIUM EDUCATION ACT

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1402) to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance programs providing education benefits for veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1402

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS; REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents; references to title 38, United States Code.
- Sec. 2. Increase in rates of basic educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill.
- Sec. 3. Additional opportunity for certain VEAP participants to enroll in basic educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill.
- Sec. 4. Increase in rates of survivors and dependents educational assistance.
- Sec. 5. Adjusted effective date for award of survivors' and dependents' educational assistance.
- Sec. 6. Revision of educational assistance interval payment requirements.
- Sec. 7. Availability of education benefits for payment for licensing or certification tests.
- Sec. 8. Extension of certain temporary authorities.
- Sec. 9. Codification of recurring provisions in annual Department of Veterans Affairs appropriations Acts.
- Sec. 10. Preservation of certain reporting requirements.

(c) REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment

or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

(a) ACTIVE DUTY EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—(1) Section 3015 is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1), by striking “\$528” and inserting “\$720”; and

(B) in subsection (b)(1), by striking “\$429” and inserting “\$585”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000, and before October 2002 under section 3015 of such title—

(A) subsection (a)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$528”; and

(B) subsection (b)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$487” for “\$429”.

(b) CPI ADJUSTMENT.—No adjustment in rates of educational assistance shall be made under section 3015(g) of title 38, United States Code, for fiscal years 2001 and 2003.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CERTAIN VEAP PARTICIPANTS TO ENROLL IN BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

(a) SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD.—Section 3018C is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e)(1) A qualified individual (described in paragraph (2)) may make an irrevocable election under this subsection, during the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection, to become entitled to basic educational assistance under this chapter. Such an election shall be made in the same manner as elections made under subsection (a)(5).

“(2) A qualified individual referred to in paragraph (1) is an individual who meets the following requirements:

“(A) The individual was a participant in the educational benefits program under chapter 32 of this title on or before October 9, 1996.

“(B) The individual has continuously served on active duty since October 9, 1996 (excluding the periods referred to in section 3202(1)(C) of this title), through at least April 1, 2000.

“(C) The individual meets the requirements of subsection (a)(3).

“(D) The individual is discharged or released from active duty with an honorable discharge.

“(3)(A) Subject to succeeding provisions of this paragraph, with respect to a qualified individual who makes an election under paragraph (1) to become entitled to basic education assistance under this chapter—

“(i) the basic pay of the qualified individual shall be reduced (in a manner determined by the Secretary concerned) until the total amount by which such basic pay is reduced is \$2,700; and

“(ii) to the extent that basic pay is not so reduced before the qualified individual’s discharge or release from active duty as specified in subsection (a)(4), at the election of the qualified individual—

“(I) the Secretary concerned shall collect from the qualified individual, or

“(II) the Secretary concerned shall reduce the retired or retainer pay of the qualified individual by,

an amount equal to the difference between \$2,700 and the total amount of reductions under clause (i), which shall be paid into the

Treasury of the United States as miscellaneous receipts.

“(B)(i) The Secretary concerned shall provide for an 18-month period, beginning on the date the qualified individual makes an election under paragraph (1), for the qualified individual to pay that Secretary the amount due under subparagraph (A).

“(ii) Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed as modifying the period of eligibility for and entitlement to basic education assistance under this chapter applicable under section 3031 of this title.

“(C) The provisions of subsection (c) shall apply to individuals making elections under this subsection in the same manner as they applied to individuals making elections under subsection (a)(5).

“(4) With respect to qualified individuals referred to in paragraph (3)(A)(ii), no amount of educational assistance allowance under this chapter shall be paid to the qualified individual until the earlier of the date on which—

“(A) the Secretary concerned collects the applicable amount under subparagraph (1) of such paragraph, or

“(B) the retired or retainer pay of the qualified individual is first reduced under subparagraph (II) of such paragraph.

“(5) The Secretary, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense, shall provide for notice to participants in the educational benefits program under chapter 32 of this title of the opportunity under this section to elect to become entitled to basic educational assistance under this chapter.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3018C(b) is amended by striking “subsection (a)” and inserting “subsection (a) or (e)”.

SEC. 4. INCREASE IN RATES OF SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—(1) Section 3532 is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1)—

(i) by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”; and

(ii) by striking “\$365” and inserting “\$540”; and

(iii) by striking “\$242” and inserting “\$360”;

(B) in subsection (a)(2), by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”;

(C) in subsection (b), by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”; and

(D) in subsection (c)(2)—

(i) by striking “\$392” and inserting “\$582”;

(ii) by striking “\$294” and inserting “\$436”; and

(iii) by striking “\$196” and inserting “\$291”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3532 of such title—

(A) subsection (a)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(i) “\$600” for “\$485”;

(ii) “\$450” for “\$365”; and

(iii) “\$300” for “\$242”;

(B) subsection (a)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”;

(C) subsection (b) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”; and

(D) subsection (c)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(i) “\$485” for “\$392”;

(ii) “\$364” for “\$294”; and

(iii) “\$242” for “\$196”.

(b) CORRESPONDENCE COURSE.—(1) Section 3534(b) is amended by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”.

(2) The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3534(b) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3534 of such title, subsection (b) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”.

(c) SPECIAL RESTORATIVE TRAINING.—(1) Section 3542(a) is amended—

(A) by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”;

(B) by striking “\$152” each place it appears and inserting “\$225”; and

(C) by striking “\$16.16” and inserting “\$24”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3542(a) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3542 of such title, subsection (a) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(A) “\$600” for “\$485”;

(B) “\$188” for “\$152” each place it appears; and

(C) “\$20” for “\$16.16”.

(d) APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING.—(1) Section 3687(b)(2) is amended—

(A) by striking “\$353” and inserting “\$524”;

(B) by striking “\$264” and inserting “\$392”;

(C) by striking “\$175” and inserting “\$260”; and

(D) by striking “\$88” and inserting “\$131”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3687(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3687 of such title, subsection (b)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(A) “\$437” for “\$353”;

(B) “\$327” for “\$264”;

(C) “\$216” for “\$175”; and

(D) “\$109” for “\$88”.

(e) PROVISION FOR ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS TO AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE.—

(1) CHAPTER 35.—(A) Subchapter VI of chapter 35 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§3564. Annual adjustment of amounts of educational assistance

“With respect to any fiscal year, the Secretary shall provide a percentage increase (rounded to the nearest dollar) in the rates payable under sections 3532, 3534(b), and 3542(a) of this title equal to the percentage by which—

“(1) the Consumer Price Index (all items, United States city average) for the 12-month period ending on the June 30 preceding the beginning of the fiscal year for which the increase is made, exceeds

“(2) such Consumer Price Index for the 12-month period preceding the 12-month period described in paragraph (1).”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 35 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3563 the following new item:

“3564. Annual adjustment of amounts of educational assistance.”.

(2) CHAPTER 36.—Section 3687 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) With respect to any fiscal year, the Secretary shall provide a percentage increase (rounded to the nearest dollar) in the rates payable under subsection (b)(2) equal to the percentage by which—

“(1) the Consumer Price Index (all items, United States city average) for the 12-month period ending on the June 30 preceding the beginning of the fiscal year for which the increase is made, exceeds

“(2) such Consumer Price Index for the 12-month period preceding the 12-month period described in paragraph (1).”.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2002 and each fiscal year beginning on or after October 1, 2003.

SEC. 5. ADJUSTED EFFECTIVE DATE FOR AWARD OF SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5113 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c);

(2) in subsection (a), by striking “subsection (b) of this section” and inserting “subsections (b) and (c)”;

(3) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection:

“(b)(1) When determining the effective date of an award of survivors' and dependents' educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title for an individual described in paragraph (2) based on an original claim, the Secretary shall consider the individual's application (under section 3513 of this title) as having been filed on the effective date from which the Secretary, by rating decision, determines that the individual is entitled to such educational assistance (such entitlement being based on the total service-connected disability evaluated as permanent in nature, or the service-connected death, of the spouse or parent from whom the individual's eligibility is derived) if that date is more than one year before the date such rating decision is made.

(2) An individual referred to in paragraph (1) is a person who is eligible for educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title by reason of subparagraph (A)(i), (A)(ii), (B), or (D) of section 3501(a)(1) of this title who—

“(A) submits to the Secretary an original application under such section 3513 for such educational assistance within one year of the date that the Secretary issues the rating decision referred to in paragraph (1);

“(B) claims such educational assistance for an approved program of education for months preceding the one-year period ending on the date on which the individual's application under such section was received by the Secretary; and

“(C) would have been entitled to such educational assistance for such course pursuit for such months, without regard to this subsection, if the individual had submitted such an application on the effective date from which the Secretary determined the individual was eligible for such educational assistance.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to applications first made under section 3513 of title 38, United States Code, that—

(1) are received on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, or

(2) on the date of the enactment of this Act, are pending (A) with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or (B) exhaustion of available administrative and judicial remedies.

SEC. 6. REVISION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE INTERVAL PAYMENT REQUIREMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subclause (C) of the third sentence of section 3680(a) is amended to read as follows:

“(C) during periods between school terms where the educational institution certifies

the enrollment of the eligible veteran or eligible person on an individual term basis if (i) the period between such terms does not exceed eight weeks, and (ii) both the terms preceding and following the period are not shorter in length than the period.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to payments of educational assistance under title 38, United States Code, for months beginning on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 7. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR PAYMENT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TESTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Sections 3452(b) and 3501(a)(5) are each amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “Such term also includes licensing or certification tests, the successful completion of which demonstrates an individual's possession of the knowledge or skill required to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession, provided such tests and the licensing or credentialing organizations or entities that offer such tests are approved by the Secretary in accordance with section 3689 of this title.”.

(b) AMOUNT OF PAYMENT.—

(1) CHAPTER 30.—Section 3032 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(g) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount of educational assistance paid such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of educational assistance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under subsection (a)(1), (b)(1), (d), or (e)(1) of section 3015 of this title, as the case may be.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual's available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(2) CHAPTER 32.—Section 3232 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual's available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(3) CHAPTER 34.—Section 3482 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to para-

graph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual's available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(4) CHAPTER 35.—Section 3532 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual's available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(c) REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING TESTING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 36 is amended by inserting after section 3688 the following new section:

“§ 3689. Approval requirements for licensing and certification testing

“(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) No payment may be made for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) or section 3501(a)(5) of this title unless the Secretary determines that the requirements of this section have been met with respect to such test and the organization or entity offering the test. The requirements of approval for tests and organizations or entities offering tests shall be in accordance with the relevant provisions of this part and with such regulations promulgated by the Secretary to carry out this section.

“(2) To the extent that the Secretary determines practicable, State approving agencies may, in lieu of the Secretary, approve licensing and certification tests, and organizations and entities offering such tests, under this section.

“(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTS.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a licensing or certification test is approved for purposes of this section only if—

“(A) the test is required under Federal, State, or local law or regulation for an individual to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession, or

“(B) the Secretary determines that the test is generally accepted, in accordance with relevant government, business, or industry standards, employment policies, or hiring practices, as attesting to a level of

knowledge or skill required to qualify to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession.

“(2) A licensing or certification test offered by a State, or a political subdivision of the State, is deemed approved by the Secretary.

“(c) REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS OR ENTITIES OFFERING TESTS.—(1) Each organization or entity that is not an entity of the United States, a State, or political subdivision of a State, that offers a licensing or certification test for which payment may be made under this part, and that meets the following requirements shall be approved by the Secretary to offer such test:

“(A) The organization or entity certifies to the Secretary that each licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity is required to obtain the license or certificate required to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession.

“(B) The organization or entity is licensed, chartered, or incorporated in a State and has offered such tests for a minimum of two years before the date on which the organization or entity first submits to the Secretary an application for approval under this section.

“(C) The organization or entity employs, or consults with, individuals with expertise or substantial experience with respect to all areas of knowledge or skill that are measured by the test and that are required for the license of certificate issued.

“(D) The organization or entity has no direct financial interest in—

“(i) the outcome of a test, or

“(ii) organizations that provide the education or training of candidates for licenses or certificates required for vocations or professions.

“(E) The organization or entity maintains appropriate records with respect to all candidates who take such a test for a period prescribed by the Secretary, but in no case for a period of less than three years.

“(F)(i) The organization or entity promptly issues notice of the results of the test to the candidate for the license or certificate.

“(ii) The organization or entity has in place a process to review complaints submitted against the organization or entity with respect to a test the organization or entity offers or the process for obtaining a license or certificate required for vocations or professions.

“(G) The organization or entity furnishes to the Secretary such information with respect to a licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity as the Secretary requires to determine whether payment may be made for the test under this part, including personal identifying information, fee payment, and test results. Such information shall be furnished in the form prescribed by the Secretary.

“(H) The organization or entity furnishes to the Secretary the following information:

“(i) A description of each licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity, including the purpose of each test, the vocational, professional, governmental, and other entities that recognize the test, and the license of certificate issued upon successful completion of the test.

“(ii) The requirements to take such a test, including the amount of the fee charged for the test and any prerequisite education, training, skills, or other certification.

“(iii) The period for which the license or certificate awarded upon successful completion of such a test is valid, and the requirements for maintaining or renewing the license or certificate.

“(I) Upon request of the Secretary, the organization or entity furnishes such information to the Secretary that the Secretary determines necessary to perform an assessment of—

“(i) the test conducted by the organization or entity as compared to the level of knowledge or skills that a license or certificate at-tests, and

“(ii) the applicability of the test over such periods of time as the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(2) With respect to each organization or entity that is an entity of the United States, a State, or political subdivision of a State, that offers a licensing or certification test for which payment may be made under this part, the following provisions of paragraph (1) shall apply to the entity: subparagraphs (E), (F), (G), and (H).

“(d) ADMINISTRATION.—(1) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this section or part, in implementing this section and making payment under this part for a licensing or certification test, the test is deemed to be a ‘course’ and the organization or entity that offers such test is deemed to be an ‘institution’ or ‘educational institution’, respectively, as those terms are applied under and for purposes of sections 3671, 3673, 3674, 3678, 3679, 3681, 3682, 3683, 3685, 3690, and 3696 of this title.

“(2) The Secretary shall use amounts appropriated to the Department in fiscal year 2001 for readjustment benefits to develop the systems and procedures required to make payments under this part for a licensing or certification test, such amounts not to exceed \$3,000,000.

“(e) PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—(1) There is established within the Department a committee to be known as the Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (hereinafter in this section referred to as the ‘Committee’).

“(2) The Committee shall advise the Secretary with respect to the requirements of organizations or entities offering licensing and certification tests to individuals for which payment for such tests may be made under this part, and such other related issues as the Committee determines to be appropriate.

“(3)(A) The Secretary shall appoint five individuals with expertise in matters relating to licensing and certification tests to serve as members of the Committee, of whom—

“(i) one shall be a representative of the Coalition for Professional Certification,

“(ii) one shall be a representative of the Council on Licensure and Enforcement, and

“(iii) one shall be a representative of the National Skill Standards Board (established under section 503 of the National Skill Standards Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. 5933)).

“(B) The Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Defense shall serve as ex-officio members of the Committee.

“(C) A vacancy in the Committee shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

“(4)(A) The Secretary shall appoint the chairman of the Committee.

“(B) The Committee shall meet at the call of the chairman.

“(C)(i) Members of the Committee shall serve without compensation.

“(ii) Members of the Committee shall be allowed reasonable and necessary travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for persons serving intermittently in the Government service in accordance with the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5 while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of the responsibilities of the Committee.

“(5) The Committee shall terminate December 31, 2006.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 36 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3688 the following new item:

“3689. Approval requirements for licensing and certification testing.”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2000, and apply with respect to licensing and certification tests approved by the Secretary on or after such date.

SEC. 8. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN TEMPORARY AUTHORITIES.

(a) ENHANCED LOAN ASSET SALE AUTHORITY.—Section 3720(h)(2) is amended by striking “December 31, 2002” and inserting “December 31, 2008”.

(b) HOME LOAN FEES.—Section 3729(a) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (4)(B)—

(A) by striking “2002” and inserting “2008”; and

(B) by striking “2003” and inserting “2009”; and

(2) in paragraph (5)(C), by striking “October 1, 2002” and inserting “October 1, 2008”.

(c) PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO LIQUIDATION SALES ON DEFAULTED HOME LOANS GUARANTEED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Section 3732(c)(11) is amended by striking “October 1, 2002” and inserting “October 1, 2008”.

(d) INCOME VERIFICATION AUTHORITY.—Section 5317(g) is amended by striking “September 30, 2002” and inserting “September 30, 2008”.

(e) LIMITATION ON PENSION FOR CERTAIN RECIPIENTS OF MEDICAID-COVERED NURSING HOME CARE.—Section 5503(f)(7) is amended by striking “September 30, 2002” and inserting “September 30, 2008”.

SEC. 9. CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS IN ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACTS.

(a) CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS.—(1) Section 313 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsections:

“(c) COMPENSATION AND PENSION.—Funds appropriated for Compensation and Pensions are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title.

“(2) Pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement Act of 1978.

“(3) The payment of benefits as authorized under chapter 18 of this title.

“(4) Burial benefits, emergency and other officers’ retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payments of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of article IV of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act of 1940 (50 U.S.C. App. 540 et seq.), and other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106 and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and the World War Adjusted Compensation Act (43 Stat. 122, 123), the Act of May 24, 1928 (Public Law No. 506 of the 70th Congress; 45 Stat. 735), and Public Law 87-875 (76 Stat. 1198).

“(d) MEDICAL CARE.—Funds appropriated for Medical Care are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, and domiciliary facilities.

“(2) Furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department, including

care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department.

“(3) Furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment.

“(4) Funeral and burial expenses and other expenses incidental to funeral and burial expenses for beneficiaries receiving care from the Department.

“(5) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department.

“(6) Oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project cost.

“(7) Repairing, altering, improving, or providing facilities in the medical facilities and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contract or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials.

“(8) Uniforms or uniform allowances, as authorized by sections 5901 and 5902 of title 5.

“(9) Aid to State homes, as authorized by section 1741 of this title.

“(10) Administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of this title and Public Law 87-693, popularly known as the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.).

“(e) MEDICAL ADMINISTRATION AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENSES.—Funds appropriated for Medical Administration and Miscellaneous Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The administration of medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities authorized by law.

“(2) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, architectural work, engineering, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department, including site acquisition.

“(3) Engineering and architectural activities not charged to project costs.

“(4) Research and development in building construction technology.

“(f) GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES.—Funds appropriated for General Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) Uniforms or allowances therefor.

“(2) Hire of passenger motor vehicles.

“(3) Reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services.

“(4) Reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail.

“(5) Administration of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 (10 U.S.C. 1143 note).

“(g) CONSTRUCTION.—Funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, and for Construction, Minor Projects, are available, with respect to a project, for the following purposes:

“(1) Planning.

“(2) Architectural and engineering services.

“(3) Maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project.

“(4) Services of claims analysts.

“(5) Offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs.

“(6) Site acquisition.

“(h) CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS.—In addition to the purposes specified in subsection (g), funds appropriated for Construction, Minor Projects, are available for—

“(1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use

of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by a natural disaster or catastrophe; and

“(2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.”.

(2)(A) Chapter 1 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans

“For the purpose of any provision of law appropriating funds to the Department for the cost of direct or guaranteed loans, the cost of any such loan, including the cost of modifying any such loan, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 661a).”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsections (c) through (h) of section 313 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), and section 116 of such title, as added by subsection (a)(2), shall take effect with respect to funds appropriated for fiscal year 2002.

SEC. 10. PRESERVATION OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

(a) INAPPLICABILITY OF PRIOR REPORTS TERMINATION PROVISION TO CERTAIN REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Section 3003(a)(1) of the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1995 (31 U.S.C. 1113 note) does not apply to any report required to be submitted under any of the following sections of title 38, United States Code: sections 503(c), 529, 541(c), 542(c), 3036, and 7312(d).

(b) REPEAL OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS TERMINATED BY PRIOR LAW.—Sections 8111A(f) and 8201(h) are repealed.

(c) SUNSET OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUITABLE RELIEF CASES.—Section 503(c) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “No report shall be required under this subsection after December 31, 2004.”.

(2) BIENNIAL REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR.—Section 541(c)(1) is amended by inserting “through 2003” after “each odd-numbered year”.

(3) BIENNIAL REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS.—Section 542(c)(1) is amended by inserting “through 2004” after “each even-numbered year”.

(4) BIENNIAL REPORTS ON MONTGOMERY GI BILL.—Subsection (d) of section 3036 is amended to read as follows:

“(d) No report shall be required under this section after January 1, 2005.”.

(5) ANNUAL REPORT OF SPECIAL MEDICAL ADVISORY GROUP.—Section 7312(d) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “No report shall be required under this subsection after December 31, 2004.”.

(d) COST INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED WITH EACH REPORT REQUIRED BY CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—(A) Chapter 1, as amended by section 9(2)(A), is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 117. Reports to Congress: cost information

“Whenever the Secretary submits to Congress, or any committee of Congress, a report that is required by law or by a joint explanatory statement of a committee of conference of the Congress, the Secretary shall include with the report—

“(1) a statement of the cost of preparing the report; and

“(2) a brief explanation of the methodology used in preparing that cost statement.”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section 9(2)(B), is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“117. Reports to Congress: cost information.”.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 117 of title 38, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1) of this subsection, shall apply with respect to any report submitted by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs after the end of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1402.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. STUMP asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, the committee amendment to S. 1402 is H.R. 4268, the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act. This bill was favorably reported by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 11.

Last year, the report of the congressional commission on service members and veterans transition assistance, better known as the Principi Commission, indicated that substantial increases in veterans' education programs are needed. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs agreed with that assessment. H.R. 4268 would take our first steps to improve veterans' education benefits as recommended in the commission report. It would increase the Montgomery GI Bill from \$536 to \$600 per month on October 1, 2000, and to \$720 a month on October 1, 2002. Educational assistance benefits for survivors and dependents would be raised at the same amount.

H.R. 4268 would also furnish individuals still on active duty the option to convert to Montgomery GI Bill eligibility if they were eligible for the post-Vietnam era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program. More needs to be done on this to bring the Montgomery GI Bill benefits in line with the rising cost of education, but this bill is a good start. We have worked closely with the Committee on the Budget on this legislation, which is paid for under the pay-go requirements of the Budget Act. I want to personally thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) for his support of this proposal and for working to include it in the budget resolution.

I urge my colleagues to support passage of S. 1402, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I want to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) for his leadership on this legislation before us today. I am optimistic that the House will enact legislation to increase the Montgomery GI Bill basic monthly benefit and make other improvements to this important veterans' readjustment program. I am very pleased that the person who provided the inspiration for this program, Sonny Montgomery, has joined us today. We appreciate his attendance. We are very pleased that he came up with the idea of the new GI Bill, and we will work with him in the future.

I also want to recognize the other gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) for his determined advocacy for veterans. He is a leader on veterans' educational benefits and health care for our retirees. On behalf of our veterans, I want to thank him for his leadership on these and many other important issues. I also welcome the support of the administration for needed benefit increases in the Montgomery GI Bill. The administration has proposed to increase the basic monthly benefit to \$670 per month effective October 1 of this year. That would provide a very significant 25 percent increase in the monthly benefit.

I think every member of our committee believes that this increase is needed, long overdue, and a step in the right direction. The administration's support for benefit increases in the GI Bill is very welcome, and I look forward to working with them in the future.

Last year, the gentleman from Arizona and I introduced separate measures to improve the Montgomery GI Bill. The legislation I authored with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), H.R. 1071, is cosponsored by 143 Members of our House of Representatives. This includes a large representation of the Members, and it is a great honor to support the gentleman from Arizona's leadership on this issue. H.R. 1071 would provide the meaningful increase in educational benefits I believe our Nation should provide to the women and men who serve our country in the Armed Forces by restoring the GI Bill's purchasing power. Mr. Speaker, we know H.R. 4268 is only the first step toward improving the Montgomery GI Bill program in a meaningful way. This legislation does comply with pay-go. Congress can enact it. It will provide real benefit increases for veterans and their dependents. That is why I hope the House will approve this unanimously today.

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank Chairman STUMP for his leadership on the legislation before us today. I am optimistic that Congress will enact legislation to increase the Mont-

gomery GI Bill basic monthly benefit and make other improvements to his important veterans' readjustment program. I also want to recognize the gentleman from Mississippi, RONNIE SHOWS, for his determined advocacy for veterans. He is a leader on veterans' educational benefits and health care for our military retirees. On behalf of our veterans, I thank him for his leadership on these and so many other important issues.

Mr. Speaker, I also welcome support from the Administration for needed benefit increases in the Montgomery GI Bill. The Administration has proposed to increase the basic monthly benefit to \$670 per month effective October 1st this year. This would provide a very significant 25% increase in the monthly benefit. I believe every Member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs believes this increase is needed, long overdue, and represents a step in the right direction. I look forward to working with the Administration in the future as we move forward with the subsequent steps necessary to restore the original purchasing power to the GI Bill.

Last year, Chairman STUMP and I introduced separate measures to improve the Montgomery GI bill. The legislation which I authored with Congressman DINGELL, H.R. 1071, is cosponsored by 143 members of the House. H.R. 1071 provides the meaningful increase in educational benefits I believe our nation should provide the women and men who serve our country in the Armed Forces.

Historically, the MGIB program has been the most important recruiting incentive for the armed services. But the value of these benefits has failed to keep up with the spiraling costs of higher education. Enhancements to rectify this problem with the MGIB are long overdue. I strongly agree with the report of the Congressional Commission on Service members and Veterans Transition Assistance, which concluded "... an opportunity to obtain the best education for which they qualify is the most valuable benefit our Nation can offer the men and women whose military service preserves our liberty." I applaud the Commission's bold, new plan for the MGIB. This proposal, however, must be further strengthened and enhanced if the MGIB is to fulfill its purposes as a meaningful readjustment benefit and as an effective recruitment incentive for our Armed Forces. Since implementation of the Montgomery GI Bill on July 1, 1985, there have been major changes in the economic and sociological landscapes that make revisions in the structure and benefit level of this program imperative.

Of immediate concern is the ineffectiveness of the MGIB as a readjustment program for service members making the transition from a military to a civilian workforce. Although costs of education have soared, nearly doubling since 1980, GI Bill benefits have not kept pace. In fact, during the 1995-96 school year, the basic benefit paid under the MGIB offsets only a paltry 36 percent of average total education costs, and the disappointingly low usage rate of 51% for 1998 confirms the inadequacy of the current program's benefit levels.

Under current law, young men and women who serve in our Armed Forces have the option of enrolling in the MGIB when they enter the military. This includes their agreement to a

\$100 per month pay reduction during the first 12 months of service, for a total contribution of \$1200. Once their initial term of service has been honorably served, a veteran is eligible to receive the basic educational benefit of \$536 each month he or she is enrolled in full-time college study. The benefit continues for up to 36 months. Assuming he or she is enrolled for a typical nine-month academic year, the veteran's total benefit for that year is \$4,824. With this modest amount he or she is expected to pay for tuition, fees, room and board.

The average annual cost of tuition and basic expenses at a four-year public college is \$8,774 for commuter students and \$10,909 for students who live on campus. Not surprisingly, the same annual costs for four-year private colleges are even higher: \$20,500 for commuter students and \$23,651 for residents. The disparity between these ever-increasing costs and a veteran's ability to pay for them is clear. This disparity recently prompted key military and veteran organizations to join together with organizations representing colleges to form the "Partnership for Veterans' Education." The coalition launched an energetic campaign calling for Congress to at least go as far as increasing the basic benefit under the MGIB to \$975 per month, enough to cover the \$8,774 average annual cost of attending a four-year public college as a commuter student.

As I've stated already, H.R. 4268 will not meet these overwhelming education costs standing on its own. It is an important step in the right direction, though, as Congress seeks to find ways to fully restore the GI Bill's purchasing power to what was originally intended. As introduced, section two of H.R. 4268 would increase the basic benefit under the GI Bill from \$536 to \$600 per month on October 1, 2000 and to \$720 per month on October 1, 2002, for full-time students, with proportionate increases for part-time students. Section three would furnish individuals still on active duty who either turned down a previous opportunity to convert to the MGIB or had a zero balance in their Vietnam era Veterans' Education Assistance Program (VEAP) account, the option to pay \$2,700 to convert to MGIB eligibility.

Section four would increase survivors' and dependents' educational assistance benefits for full-time students from \$485 to \$600 per month effective October 1, 2000, and \$720 per month effective October 1, 2002, with proportionate increases from part-time students. An annual cost of living adjustment is also authorized.

Section five would permit the award of Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance payments to be retroactive to the date of VA's adjudication of a service-connected death or a 100% disability rating. Section six would solve a problem that faces a small number of students whose schools have different schedules. It would allow for monthly educational assistance benefits to be paid between term, quarter, or semester intervals of up to 8 weeks in duration. Section seven would allow the use of Montgomery GI Bill

benefits to pay for fee associated with a veteran's civilian occupational licensing or certification examination.

To offset the costs of H.R. 4268, section eight of the bill as introduced, would extend temporary authorities to 2008 that would otherwise expire on September 30, 2002. These include a VA enhanced loan asset authority guaranteeing the payment of principal and interest on VA-issued certificates or other securities; VA home loan fees of three-quarters of 1 percent of the total loan amount, procedures applicable to liquidation sales on defaulted home loans guaranteed by VA; VA/Department of Health and Human Services income verification authority in which VA verifies the eligibility of, or applicants for, VA needs-based benefits and VA means-tested medical care by gaining access to income records of the Department of Health and Human Services/Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service; and limitation on VA pension on veterans without dependents receiving Medicaid-covered nursing home care.

In addition, section nine of the bill would codify recurring provisions in annual VA appropriations acts, and section ten would reinstate the requirements that the Secretary provide periodic reports. Specifically, these concern reports on equitable relief granted by the Secretary to an individual beneficiary (expires December 31, 2004); work and activities of the Department; programs and activities examined by the Advisory Committees on Former Prisoners of War and Women Veterans (expires after biennial reports submitted in 2003); operation of the Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program (expires December 31, 2004); and the activities of the Secretary's special medical advisory group (expires December 31, 2004). In addition, section ten requires the Secretary to include with any report an estimate of the cost of preparing the report.

The current structure of the MGIB served the veterans of the second half of the 20th century very well. However, the MGIB must now be re-examined in the context of a January, 1999 report by the Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Education, the Small Business Administration, and the National Institute for Literacy. This report, entitled "21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs," has important implications for veterans entering the civilian workforce. Emphasizing the importance to the nation of investing in education and training, the report concluded changes in the economy and workplace are requiring greater levels of skill and education than ever before. It predicted eight of the ten fastest growing jobs in the next decade will require college education or moderate to long-term training, and jobs requiring a bachelor's degree will increase by 25%. The report also noted workers with more education enjoy greater benefits, experience less unemployment and, if dislocated, re-enter the labor force far more quickly than individuals with less education. It also reports that, on average, college graduates earn 77% more than individuals with only a high school diploma. If America's veterans are to success-

fully compete in the challenging 21st century workforce, they simply have to have the ability to obtain the education and training critical to their success. As noted by the Transition Commission, ". . . education will be the key to employment in the information age."

According to the 1997 Department of Defense report entitled "Population Representation in the Military Services," 20% of the new enlisted recruits for that year were African American, 10% were Hispanic, 6% were other minorities, including Native Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders, and 18% were women. The report further notes that, although members of the military come from backgrounds somewhat lower in socioeconomic status than the U.S. average, these young men and women have higher levels of education, measured aptitudes, and reading skills than their civilian counterparts. These young people, most of whom do not enter military service with financial or socioeconomic advantages, have enormous potential, and it is in the best interests of the nation they be given every opportunity to achieve their highest potential. Access to education is the key to achieving that potential. It is also important to remember that, through the sacrifices required of them through their military service, this group of young Americans—more than any other—earns the benefits provided for them by a grateful nation.

Of equal concern to me as a member of the Armed Services Committee is the MGIB program's failure to fulfill its purpose as a recruitment incentive for the Armed Forces. Findings of the 1998 Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS)—confirm that recruiters are faced with serious challenges, and these challenges are likely to continue. This survey of young men and women, conducted annually by the Department of Defense, provides information on the propensity, attitudes and motivations of young people toward military service. The latest YATS shows the propensity to enlist among young males has fallen from 34% in 1991 to 26% in 1998, in spite of a generally favorable view of the military. In addition to a thriving civilian economy, which inevitably results in recruiting challenges, the percentage of American youth going to college is increasing and the young people most likely to go to college express little interest in joining our Armed Forces. Interestingly, these same youth note that if they were to serve in the military, their primary reason for enlisting would be to earn educational assistance benefits.

The study concluded the propensity to enlist is substantially below pre-drawdown levels and, as a result, the services will probably not succeed in recruiting the number of young, high-quality men and women they need in FY 1999. High-quality youth are defined as those who have a high school diploma and who have at least average scores on tests measuring mathematical and verbal skills. The Department of Defense tells us about 80% of these recruits will complete their first three years of active duty while only 50% of recruits with a GED will complete their enlistment.

GAO notes that it costs at least \$35,000 to replace a recruit who leaves the service prematurely. The report states these findings underscore the need for education benefits that will attract college-bound youth who need money for school, a segment of American young people we conclude are not opting to take advantage of the many other sources of federal education assistance. The current structure and benefit level of the MGIB must be significantly amended if these high quality young men and women are to be attracted to service in our Armed Forces.

The Army has been missing its enlistment goals several times now. Additionally, for the first time since 1979, the Air Force may be missing its targets too. Although the Navy and Marine Corps are currently meeting their enlistment goals, they will likely miss them in the future unless we take quick and effective action. The CINC, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Paul Reason, recently reported to the Senate Armed Services Committee that the last three carrier battle groups have deployed with forces below the required manning level. Specifically, the U.S.S. *Theodore Roosevelt* battle group deployed last year with 9% of its positions unfilled. These are strong indications of a coming readiness crisis, and we must not ignore these disturbing signals.

Many factors have come together to create what could soon develop into a recruiting emergency. First, our thriving national economy is generating employment opportunities for our young people. Additionally, young Americans increasingly see a college education as the key to success and prosperity. In 1980, 74% of high school graduates went to college but, by 1992, that percentage had risen to 81% and is increasing. As a result, the military must compete head-to-head with colleges for high-quality youth. As I have mentioned already, the percentage of young Americans who are interested in serving in the Armed Forces is also shrinking. Make no mistake about it—the strength of our Armed Forces begins and ends with the men and women who serve our nation. Just as education is the key to a society's success or failure, it is also key to the quality and effectiveness of our military forces—and the MGIB increases included in this substitute budget resolution are a step in the right direction toward providing that key.

Veterans are not using the MGIB benefits they earned through honorable military service, and high-ability, college-bound young Americans are choosing not to serve in the Armed Forces. Significant changes in the program will increase program usage and will enable the military services to recruit the smart young people they need. Accordingly, several bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate during the 106th Congress that would significantly improve the MGIB. The Senate has twice passed legislation that included numerous changes designed to enhance educational opportunities under the

MGIB, and other bills have been introduced. In the House, MGIB legislation has been introduced by Mr. STUMP, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. SHOWS, and me, the Ranking Democrat on the Committee. H.R. 4268 is the most likely of these legislative initiatives to be passed by the House and move forward. Mr. Speaker, we know H.R. 4268 is only the first step that needs to be taken to improve the MGIB program. H.R. 4268 does comply with pay-go and should be enacted by Congress. It will provide real benefit increases for veterans and their dependents. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the House to vote unanimously in favor of the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits.

Mr. QUINN. I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of the amendment to S. 1402. On April 13, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), and 21 members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs introduced the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act, H.R. 4268, which was the culmination of over 16 months of effort.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take some time now to be specific about what is in this bill and how it helps almost immediately close to a half a million of our veterans and their families. This excellent bipartisan bill improves the veterans' readjustment and military recruitment aspects of the Montgomery GI Bill. In fact, I believe it builds on the wisdom and foresight of the revered individual and our friend, Sonny Montgomery, who is with us this morning for whom Congress named the all-volunteer force Educational Assistance Program back in 1987.

S. 1402, as amended, then will help hundreds of thousands of veterans, service members and their families; and it will do so right now. For over 300,000 veteran-students now using the Montgomery GI Bill and young Americans contemplating service in our all-volunteer force, effective October 1 of this year, the bill increases the basic Montgomery GI Bill benefit from \$536 per month, as was mentioned, to \$600 per month. On October 1, 2002, it increases this basic benefit to \$720 per month. Each of these improvements have proportional increases for part-time students and for those who enlist for only 2 years. Currently, the Montgomery GI Bill provides \$19,296 in benefits over 4 years. Over the next 4 years, our bill increases this amount to \$23,760, an increase of over \$4,400.

This bill will be welcome news for 137,000 active-duty service members who either previously turned down an opportunity to convert from the post-Vietnam era Veterans Educational Assistance Program, which has come to

be known as VEAP, to the Montgomery GI Bill or who had a zero balance in their VEAP account previously. For a \$2,700 buy-in, these individuals will receive full Montgomery GI Bill benefits. We have also structured in the bill the buy-in so service members who retire as of April 1 of this year and later will also be eligible.

We will help about 48,000 survivors and dependents of veterans who died or are permanently disabled as the result of military service. We will increase their monthly benefits to go to college from \$485 per month to \$600 per month effective this October and to \$720 per month 2 years in the future. We will also help about 360 veteran-students attending Ohio University and hundreds of veterans at other colleges around the country. These are colleges that take an extended term break between Thanksgiving and New Year's, for example.

This measure would allow veteran-students to be paid for the 40-day term interval just as student-veterans with a 30-day interval or less. Lastly, we will help about 25,000 service members who are discharged from the military each year who need a civilian license or certification to enter, maintain, or advance their vocation or profession. They will be able to use their Montgomery GI Bill benefits to pay for these examinations, which sometimes average to be \$150 each or more. All told, about a half a million, 519,000 veterans, survivors and service members will benefit from this measure during the first year of its enactment.

Mr. Speaker, the spending associated with the bill is budget neutral over 5 years. We have identified offsets by eliminating sunset dates on certain provisions, including veterans home loan fees, liquidation sales on defaulted home loans, authority for VA to access IRS data for determining eligibility for veterans' pension benefits and limitations on pensions for some veterans in nursing homes who are eligible for Medicaid coverage instead.

Forty-two veterans, military service and higher education organizations have supported and endorsed the bill. In closing, this morning's bill is only the first step. Indeed, we had lengthy discussions at the full committee during the markup that it is not all that we want to do, but it is what we can do right now and make a difference. We look forward to continuing our work with veterans, military, and higher education associations in the partnership for veterans' education to find ways to continue to improve Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues this afternoon to support S. 1402, as amended. I also want to close by thanking the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) who have served together on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs now for almost 19 years for their enduring commitment on veterans issues. Today's bill we see

is an excellent example of their strong bipartisan leadership on behalf of our Nation's service members and veterans.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I have to be honest with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I am disappointed in this bill. I know the deep commitment that the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits, have for the veterans of this Nation. I know they want to do what is best for our veterans. But the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act, S. 1402, does not come even close to where we need to be for an effective educational benefit for our veterans today. If this is a bill for the millennium, it is a bill for the last millennium.

Let me try to show that through the history that our committee has gone through. The previous speakers have talked about the congressional Commission on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance, which reported its work to the Congress more than a year ago. That commission said that the biggest single thing we can do for our veterans in terms of benefits is to make the Montgomery GI Bill really relevant to their education and pick up the full cost of college education plus a decent stipend.

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In fact, that would be a great inducement to recruitment, which, as we all know, is falling behind today.

Everybody on our Committee on Veterans' Affairs applauded that recommendation and said we ought to move forward with it. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), the ranking member of the committee, introduced H.R. 1071, which said that the recommendations of that Transition Commission were accepted. That bill would pay for the full cost of tuition, fees, books, and supplies, and, in addition, a stipend of \$800 a month. The gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) put forward a bill which was almost as good. His bill, H.R. 1182, would have paid for 90 percent of a veteran's tuition cost.

When those of us on the committee and the veterans and education community recognized we would have to take steps toward that and could not do it all at once, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) introduced H.R. 4344, which had a broad coalition backing of 47 organizations which represented veterans of our Nation, the military and the higher education community. The bill of the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) would reimburse veterans for the cost of attending a 4-year public college as a commuter student, and that worked out for this year to a monthly stipend of \$975.

That stipend of \$975 should be compared with the \$600 that is in the current bill. We can do better. The gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN) said this is something we can do right now, we can do the bill of the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) right now. We have the funds to do that.

The bill before us just will not accomplish what the Montgomery GI Bill set out to do and what the Transition Commission recommended. The \$536 that a veteran gets now does not go very far considering the cost of higher education. In fact, the increase to \$600 has already been eaten up by the inflationary pressures that are faced by our colleges. If you compare that with the \$300 a month that was the benefit back in 1985, you can see how the benefit has not kept up with current demands.

Today, when America's economy is booming, when our budget is in great surplus, I have a hard time looking veterans in the eye and telling them to pursue a degree with the kind of money that the Montgomery Bill gives them today. It comes up short when you compare it to the cost of higher education. All our veterans know it, we know it, the committee knows it, and all of you here said that you know it. You see this as a first step.

Now, I know that, as I said, our leadership on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) on the Democratic side, we all want to do more, and I certainly will work with both of you, all of you, in the months ahead to provide the kind of education benefits that our veterans deserve and this new millennium demands.

People have said that our former member, Sonny Montgomery, great chairman of the committee, is with us in the Chamber. We salute him, we salute the bill to which he gave his name, the Montgomery GI Bill. Let us really honor Sonny Montgomery by significantly, in the months ahead, improving this benefit for our veterans.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), a member of the committee.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the full committee, the dean of our delegation, for yielding me time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise as the vice chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits, thanking the chairman of the subcommittee for his comments, thanking the ranking member for his comments, and acknowledging that, in a free society, dealing with difficult questions, at times there are those who are frustrated because, in their minds, perfection is alluded. Let me suggest, Mr. Speaker, to all those within the sound of my voice, and especially my colleagues here today, we will never achieve perfection. Indeed, one of the challenges we confront is how to best

shape and prioritize the very serious constitutional missions that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important for this Congress to reaffirm support for men and women in uniform who confront shortages in terms of ammunition, in terms of training, in terms of their dependence, and those are other questions with which we must deal.

Would, Mr. Speaker, that all of us here could show the same allegiance to those currently wearing the uniform as we profess for veterans. But let us turn to the question of those currently in uniform and one of the reasons I rise in strong support of this legislation. It is something that my colleague from New York, the chairman of the subcommittee, pointed out; the fact that now we have provided provisions for those service members who are unable to convert their funds to the Montgomery GI Bill during the 1997 open window to do so with this. First, individuals who had no money in their VEAP accounts, often because their service branch advised them to transfer their VEAP dollars to an interest-bearing account; and secondly, those who had some money in their VEAP account and did not convert because they did not know of the opportunity.

So it is in this spirit that we take that step today, not only mindful of our good friend from Mississippi who joins us, the former chairman of this committee, but also speaking volumes about the leadership of my good friend from Arizona and the ranking member from Illinois, and that we do not let the perfect become the enemy of the good, but we stand tall for this important legislation to help current service members and veterans receive the educational benefits they deserve.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further questions for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), a member of the committee.

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), a veteran himself, who has been a dedicated individual for veterans rights, for granting me the time to speak on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise today in support of S. 1402 and this important update to the historic Montgomery GI Bill, a bill which was originally sponsored by my good friend, Sonny Montgomery from Mississippi, who is present with us today.

I think it is an honor for all of us to have an opportunity to help educate hundreds of thousands of veterans and service members and their families. This bill will go a long way, especially addressing some of the needs of our guard and reserve members as well. Best of all, it will help them now.

Mr. Speaker, America is proud, and rightly so, of its tradition of defense by

its citizen soldiers; and we in this Congress are, for the first time, beginning to reverse decades of declining resources dedicated to equipping our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines for their combat roles. This bill now under consideration does the same for equipping them in advancing their educational goals.

This budget-neutral bill will increase the Montgomery GI stipend by a third over 2 years, it will increase the monies available to surviving families of deceased service members, and it will provide the licensing or certification of funds for veterans who are integrating into the civilian workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I join the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman STUMP); the ranking member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS); and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits (Chairman QUINN) in urging your support for the strong and much deserved bipartisan Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the chairman of our Committee on International Relations.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1402, the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Act, and I thank the distinguished chairman of our committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) for his continual support of our veterans and for bringing this measure to the floor at this time; along with the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN); and the ranking minority member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for giving us the opportunity to consider this measure.

I want to add my compliments to the former Congressman, the former chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Mr. Montgomery, who has been the father and major proponent of the GI Bill. We are pleased he is here with us today.

The purpose of this bill is to bring the various education benefits afforded to veterans to a level more in line with today's increasingly expensive higher education opportunities. Specifically, the legislation increases the monthly Montgomery GI Bill rate from \$536 a month to \$600 a month, beginning in October of this year. That amount increases to \$720 a month starting in October of 2002. The bill also increases survivors and dependents educational assistance, which is so important.

Mr. Speaker, the GI Bill is arguably the most profound and far-reaching piece of legislation enacted by Congress in the 20th Century. It has helped many of us here in the Congress. The program, first implemented after World War II, single-handedly afforded

a college education to millions of working class men and women who served during the war, and, in doing so, it helped to transform America in the post-war years, leading to the baby-boom and the rise in middle-class suburbia.

This measure is the latest of several bills passed in the last 50 years to bring the benefits of the GI Bill to levels that reflect the contemporary costs of higher education. Consequently, current and future generations are going to be able to enjoy the tangible benefits of a college education as a result of their service in the military of their country. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this worthy and timely legislation.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), the ranking member on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for all of his hard work on this bill, and also his own bill, which would have benefitted the veterans very much. I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN) and the Subcommittee on Benefits for the work they have done on this bill. My appreciation is extended to the leadership for allowing us to present this bill today. It is fitting we have a veterans benefits bill on Memorial Day for our ceremonies throughout the country. This is a bipartisan bill, and I urge Members to support it.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 1402, The Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act. As you know, this bill will assist veterans and their family in attaining enhanced educational assistance.

Since inception in 1944, educational benefits for our nation's veterans have opened the doors to post-secondary education opportunities for millions. Specifically, The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) has been one of our nation's leading and most effective programs. Millions of our nation's military personnel and their dependents have been able to afford a post-secondary education, who might otherwise not have been able to if not for the MGIB.

Under the Montgomery GI Bill, military officers accept a reduction in their base pay of \$100 per month for 12 months. In exchange, they become entitled to 36 months of education benefits after they complete their period of service or receive an honorable discharge from the Armed Forces.

This program has enhanced our nation's competitiveness and military readiness by helping to develop a more educated and productive workforce and assisted the Armed Services in recruiting and retaining the high quality individuals they need to attract to the military. According to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Togo D. West, "new recruits to the Armed Forces cite money for college as the major reason given for enlisting." As a matter of fact, some 96% of new recruits to the Armed Forces sign up to participate specifically in the GI Bill.

However, despite the wisdom and foresight of this meaningful educational assistance program, the MGIB has lost its effectiveness as

both a readjustment and recruitment tool. The amount available under the MGIB is not enough to compensate youth for the time spent and risk involved in military service. In fact, since 1985, about 95 percent of service members have paid \$1,200 to participate in the MGIB; nevertheless, only about half of these members have used their MGIB. Clearly, the time has come for Congress to intervene and make this bill viable again for our military members, their dependents and our nation.

S. 1402 will make this meaningful program viable once. Specifically, this bill will increase the MGIB from \$536 to \$600 per month on October 1, 2000, and \$720 per month on October 1, 2002, for full-time students, with proportionate increases for part-time students. Second, this bill will equip individuals still on active duty, who have turned down a previous opportunity to convert to the MGIB or have had a zero balance in their Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) account, the option to pay \$2,700 to convert to MGIB eligibility. Third, the bill will increase survivors' and dependents' educational assistance benefits for full-time students from \$485 to \$600 per month, and authorize an annual cost-of-living adjustment for them. Finally, S. 1402 will allow MGIB benefits to pay the fee for a veteran's civilian occupational licensing or certification examination. Nevertheless, I hope this Congress will soon move to fully fund our veterans who desire to seek opportunities for higher education.

I believe that S. 1402 will assist our nation in securing educated and highly skilled military recruits. In addition, this bill will secure the future of our military as well. As a result, I urge my colleagues to pass this vital bill and make this worthwhile program viable once again.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the amendment offered to S. 1402. This truly bipartisan effort addresses many of the problems service members face with regard to accessing adequate GI bill education benefits.

Over the last several years, veterans and their families have called on Congress to increase veterans education assistance, and equally important, correct the injustices that have prevented many of the VEAP era veterans from receiving GI bill education benefits. Congress, through the leadership of House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman STUMP and Ranking Member Mr. EVANS have answered their call by offering this amendment.

While this legislation may not fully address the concerns of the veterans community, it is clearly another giant step in our continued efforts to improve GI bill education benefits. Rest assured, that my colleagues and I on the House Veterans Affairs Committee will continue to fight for improved and increased GI bill educational benefits.

Leaving the active military can be a very difficult time period for veterans and their families. It is filled with uncertainty, apprehension, and trepidation. Unfortunately, the current GI bill education benefit has failed to keep pace with the rapidly changing economy. In fact, many veterans have found that current educational assistance does not meet their transition needs.

Furthermore, many other Federal programs offer far greater benefits for little or no commitment. In fact, veterans educational assistance is one of the few Federal educational benefits

that is truly earned with sweat equity, and yes, sometimes blood or loss of limb.

For these reasons, improving GI bill education benefits and increasing access to these benefits is extremely important. Not only do GI bill educational benefits assist veterans as they transition back into the local communities that they willingly left to serve this nation, these benefits also reflect the gratitude of a grateful nation. I believe GI bill benefits, and this amendment represent a fitting and proper way to say thank you for your sacrifice and unselfish commitment in protecting America's cherished freedoms and liberties.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment holds true to the spirit of the original GI bill that Congress passed in 1944. It will improve and increase access to veterans educational assistance, and allow veterans the opportunity to make a more complete transition as they leave the military and enter the civilian workforce.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of S. 1402, the Veterans Millennium Education Bill.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation, which is a long overdue step to address the serious erosion of our veterans educational benefits. Through this bill we raise the educational benefits our veterans deserve and provide the recruitment incentive our Armed Forces need.

Montgomery GI Bill benefits allow our Nation to extend its gratitude to veterans for their service, compensate them for their time away from family and careers, and gives them the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills through attendance at our Nation's colleges and universities.

With the opportunities it provides to obtain an education, the GI bill has been considered the most significant reason for our country's high educational attainment and post-World War II economic leadership and success.

Over time, however, the value of GI bill benefits has not kept pace with the rising costs of higher education. In fact there is a gross disparity between current benefits and the costs of going to school. In an environment where there are greater sources of private scholarships and funding, along with a strong economy, our best recruits no longer see the same value in the GI bill. This has seriously hurt military recruiting efforts.

Our veterans deserve better, and from a national security standpoint, we cannot afford to allow our military to be without necessary manpower and strength. With a strong economy and large budget surpluses this situation has been unacceptable.

As a result, I am proud that this bill enhances educational assistance amounts by almost 30 percent over 3 years, and at the same time addresses a long time injustice, by allowing for those men and women still on active duty to convert to the Montgomery GI Bill from their Vietnam Era Veterans' Education Assistance Program [VEAP].

The benefit increases in H.R. 4268, raise the monthly amount from \$536 to \$600 per month on October 1, 2000 and to \$720 per month on October 1, 2002 for full-time students.

While further increases in benefits are needed, this bill creates a strong foundation for bringing the educational and training benefits to the level for which our veterans are entitled.

We must never fail in our efforts to maintain, enhance, and improve the benefits entitled to

our veteran population. By doing this, we honor their service, and adequately provide for their needs and the recruiting requirements of our Armed Forces.

I therefore stand in support of this bill, and ask my colleagues to join in voting for its passage.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in enthusiastic support of S. 1402, the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act of 2000 which would increase the amount of educational assistance to veterans under the Montgomery GI Bill. This is a bipartisan bill that is long over due and I complement Veterans Committee Chairman STUMP and Ranking Democrat EVANS for their leadership in bringing it to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to fail our veterans in repaying them for their service to their country. We send them off to fight in our defense and yet when they return we break many of the promises that were made to them. This bill is a start in the right direction in reversing this trend. We owe our veterans much more than we have been giving them.

If it becomes law, the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act, would increase the current Montgomery GI Bill benefit from \$536 to \$600 a month on October 1, 2000 for full time students and to \$720 on October 1, 2000. There would also be proportional increases for part-time students, as well.

The bill would also increase survivors' and dependents' educational assistance benefits for full-time students from \$485 to \$600 a month starting October 1, 2000 and to \$720 a month on October 1, 2000. It would also permit the award of survivors' and dependents' educational assistance payments to be retroactive to the date of the service-connected death or award of 100 percent disability rating.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the many Virgin Islands veterans being able to take advantage of the increased benefits offered by this bill to further their education. In today's world where a high premium is placed on our workforce being highly skilled, this bill makes such training and higher education more affordable to our veterans.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be an original sponsor of the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act [H.R. 4268], the chairman and ranking members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and others, have worked tirelessly to craft this important bill in a collaborative and bipartisan fashion.

Passage of the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act will benefit more than 500,000 people immediately, and its increase of Montgomery G.I. Bill [MGIB] benefits will go a long way toward recruiting—and retaining—more young Americans to serve our country in uniform. Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to honor those who have died in service to our country on Memorial Day, we must also remember our obligation to help those who continue to defend our country. Increasing education benefits for those who have responded to the call of duty is the least we can do. Under this legislation, Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits for full-time students will rise from \$536 to \$600 per month on October 1, 2000, and to \$720 per month on October 1, 2002. The bill also authorizes proportional increases for part-time students.

Similarly, H.R. 4268 increases survivors' and dependents' educational assistance for

full-time students from \$485 to \$600 per month at the start of fiscal year 2001, and to \$720 per month at the beginning of fiscal year 2003. Importantly, today's bill makes these benefits retroactive to the date of the veteran's service-connected death or 100 percent service-connected disability rating. It is worth noting that H.R. 4268 also provides an annual cost-of-living adjustment for survivors' and dependents' educational assistance, which is currently available only for MGIB benefits.

The veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act also fills an important gap in our military's education assistance program for some 137,000 active duty personnel. For these service men and women who either turned down an earlier opportunity to convert to the Montgomery G.I. bill program, or who have no funds in their Vietnam-Era Veterans' Education Assistance Program [VEAP] account—the educational assistance program in place before MGIB—a payment of \$2,700 enables them to receive full MGIB benefits. This important provision will be a major help to many senior non-commissioned officers who, after leaving the service, often attend college part time while working.

Finally, H.R. 4268 accommodates students who attend a college or university that has extended breaks, by permitting MGIB or similar benefits to be paid between intervals of up to 8 weeks. The Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act provides added flexibility by permitting these benefits to be used for civilian occupational licensing or a certification examination.

I would like to point out that the legislation which we are considering today is deficit-neutral. By reauthorizing programs already in place that either save or generate revenue—such as the VA home loan fee of $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 percent—we can provide these improved benefits to veterans and their families. I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1402, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUPPORTING DAY OF HONOR FOR MINORITY WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 98) supporting the Day of Honor 2000 to honor and recognize the service of minority veterans in the United States Armed Forces during World War II.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.J. RES. 98

Whereas World War II was a determining event of the 20th century in that it ensured

the preservation and continuation of American democracy;

Whereas the United States called upon all its citizens, including the most oppressed of its citizens, to provide service and sacrifice in that war to achieve the Allied victory over Nazism and fascism;

Whereas the United States citizens who served in that war, many of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, included more than 1,200,000 African Americans, more than 300,000 Hispanic Americans, more than 50,000 Asian Americans, more than 20,000 Native Americans, more than 6,000 Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and more than 3,000 Native Alaskans;

Whereas because of invidious discrimination, many of the courageous military activities of these minorities were not reported and honored fully and appropriately until decades after the Allied victory in World War II;

Whereas the motto of the United States, "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of Many, One), promotes our fundamental unity as Americans and acknowledges our diversity as our greatest strength; and

Whereas the Day of Honor 2000 Project has enlisted communities across the United States to participate in celebrations to honor minority veterans of World War II on May 25, 2000, and throughout the year 2000: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress—

(1) commends the African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Native Alaskan, and other minority veterans of the United States Armed Forces who served during World War II;

(2) especially honors those minority veterans who gave their lives in service to the United States during that war;

(3) supports the goals and ideas of the Day of Honor 2000 in celebration and recognition of the extraordinary service of all minority veterans in the United States Armed Forces during World War II; and

(4) authorizes and requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to honor these minority veterans with appropriate programs and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Joint Resolution 98.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.J. Res. 98 commends minority veterans of the United States Armed Forces who served during World War II. I commend the authors of this resolution for promoting recognition of minority World War II veterans during this millennium year.

Some of the groups that deserve greater public recognition for their heroic service in World War II include the